Refugee Return and Social Cohesion

Abstract

We explore the impact of refugee return on measures related to social cohesion using data from Burundi, a country that experienced high levels of repatriation during the 2000s. We use geographic features of the communities of origin for identification purposes. Our results suggest varying impacts of refugee return on different aspects of social cohesion. The stronger effects, suggest that refugee return has a negative impact on the feeling that community members help each other, could borrow money for emergencies from non-household members and feeling that the community is peaceful. The estimated impacts on measures of trust and participation in community groups are mostly statistically insignificant. We also explore how these effects differ across different sub-samples based on ethnic composition, land scarcity (pre-war) and attitudes towards return. The results suggest that the negative effect on the feeling that community members help each other is stronger in communities with worse attitudes towards refugee return. These results highlight the possible role of the creation of migration-related divisions in the forced migration context in affecting post-return social cohesion.

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1. Introduction

The preferred "solution" to displacement for millions of refugees worldwide is to return home (UNHCR 2019). For some this return will occur eventually, even if years or sometimes decades have passed since they left their home communities. However, there is little understanding of the impact of repatriation on social cohesion in communities of return. This is a major gap in the evidence as social cohesion is crucial to maintain peace and stability in communities that are recovering from conflict. In this paper, we explore the impact of repatriation on social cohesion in communities of return.

While there is limited evidence on the impacts of refugee return on social cohesion, there is substantial evidence on the impact of exposure to conflict on social cohesion (Bauer et al. 2016). This evidence, which comes from a range of academic disciplines, provides insights on the possible positive and negative impacts of repatriation on social cohesion in communities of return. On the positive side, those more exposed to conflict tend to behave more cooperatively after the end of conflict. They are more likely to join social and civic groups and get involved in activities that are intended to benefit others (Bellows and Miguel 2009; Gilligan, Pasquale, and Samii 2014; Voors et al. 2012). These effects tend to be long-lasting. On the negative side, studies suggest there is a tendency for those more exposed to conflict to cooperate less with out-group members (Bauer et al. 2014; Cecchi, Leuveld, and Voors 2016).

Therefore, an important aspect is whether stayees (i.e. those who did not leave the country during the conflict) and returnees perceive each other in a way that would lead to greater social cohesion after conflict. Divisions that led to conflict, such as clan, ethnic, regional or class lines, can still be present after conflict and can overlap with return patterns if returnees or stayees are concentrated in a particular group.

The process of large scale emigration during the conflict can also lead to the creation of new divisions in society (e.g. stayees versus returnees). These divisions can either replace or get mixed with more traditional identification categories. This is referred to by Schwartz (2019) as migration-related divisions, broadly, societal divisions created by the location of individuals during the war. There is evidence of these types of divisions in many countries including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, South Sudan and El Salvador.

Returnees share the common experience of escaping the conflict, adapting to life abroad, sometimes even growing up abroad, and returning home (with many being forced to return). Stayees, on the other hand, can have different perceptions on patriotism, nationhood and deservedness of limited community resources given their role in protecting these resources during the conflict. These divisions can have major implications for social cohesion in communities that have been exposed to conflict and in which we would expect less cooperation with outgroup members.

The impact of repatriation is not confined to identity issues only, there could be broader economic concerns (Ruiz and Vargas-Silva 2021). This is particularly the case in communities that have limited natural resources. The influx of a large number of returnees can lead to more competition for those resources (e.g. land, water) and affect the level of social cohesion in the community.

To explore the impact of refugee return on social cohesion we use data collected in Burundi in 2015. This country experienced a major conflict during the 1993-2005 period, in which close to 5% of the population was killed and around 10% was displaced to other countries, mainly to neighbouring Tanzania (Ruiz and Vargas-Silva 2015; Ruiz and Vargas-Silva 2016). The improvement in security conditions in Burundi, along with the end of protection and access to services in neighbouring countries led to the return of over 500,000 refugees in the period of a few years.

The agreement to end the conflict stated that refugees must be able to recover their property(Republic of Burundi 2000) , 'especially their land' (Protocol IV, Chapter 1, Article 8, 80). This was a strong incentive for former refugees to return to their communities of origin, as this is the place in which they could claim land. Therefore, we explore a case in which refugees did not have the option to stay in the host country and returned to their communities of origin.

In order to address potential issues regarding endogeneity between social cohesion and displacement levels, we control for conflict exposure and use an instrumental variable methodology which relies on distance to the border of Tanzania and altitude (i.e. elevation or distance above sea level). In Burundi, most of the displacement occurred by foot and distance to the border and altitude affected the level of international displacement from any given community. We check the plausibility of the instrument by using pre-war characteristics of the individuals, households and communities.

In the analysis, we explore the impact of refugee return in general and by community sub-groups placing emphasis on the role of ethnic diversity, (pre-war) land scarcity and attitudes towards migrant return in driving the results. The initial expectation is that in less diverse communities, migration-based divisions would be more salient, therefore refugee return can have a more adverse effect on social cohesion. Also, in communities in which land scarcity is a bigger problem, return can lead to greater tensions regarding the rights to the land. Therefore, we would expect the impact of return on social cohesion to be more negative/less positive in communities with less ethnic diversity, less land available and more negative attitudes towards return.

2. Contextual and conceptual background

As shown in Figure 1, there are four different stages related to Burundi–Tanzania displacement.[1] First, there were about 150,000 Burundian refugees in Tanzania prior to 1993. These refugees fled Burundi in 1972 and most of them have since being offered citizenship by Tanzania. Burundi experienced a conflict from 1993 to 2005, which led to another major refugee outflow. Ethnic rivalries (Hutus versus Tutsis) have historically played a key role in Burundian conflicts, although the 1993 conflict was complex and some dynamics expand beyond simple ethnic tensions (Ndikumana 2005). At the peak of the crisis there were over 500,000 Burundian refugees in Tanzania. After the signing of the peace agreement, Tanzania closed the camps for the 1993 conflict refugees, ended official protection for this group and pushed them to return home. By 2009, the large majority of refugees from the 1993 conflict had returned to Burundi, along with about 50,000 of the 1972 refugees. This period of return lasted for a few years until late 2015 when there was a new spike of displacement following an announcement from the President of Burundi that he was running for a third term in office, what many considered a violation of the peace agreements. As we explain in the next section this occurred after the end of data collection for this paper, therefore in our analysis we focus on the return period.

[Figure 1]

The recovery of the "promised" agricultural land represented a problem for returnees. Many found their land occupied by others or sold by family members who had returned to Burundi earlier(Hovil 2009; van Leeuwen 2010) . In other cases, land abandoned by refugees was allocated to other households by the government (Fransen and Kuschminder 2012). The main challenge with the peace agreement conditions was that in practice there was insufficient land available to give returnees a landholding equivalent to their pre-exile land (van Leeuwen 2010). Many of the solutions to land disputes involved land-sharing agreements that did not fully satisfied either party(Ndayirukiye and Takeuchi 2014). This tension related to land, and who has a claim to the land, can lead to more social tensions in communities with higher levels of return.

Schwartz (2019)conducted several months of ethnographic work in Burundi during 2015 to explore, among other aspects, to what degree individuals in the post-conflict period identified along "migration-related divisions" (e.g. stayees versus returnees), instead of, or perhaps in addition to, other more traditional identification categories such as ethnicity. She provides ample evidence of group identification based on migration-based divisions. Individuals in different communities made a distinction between the *Les Rapatriés* and *Les Résidents* and even use other labels such as "the Tanzanians" in reference to returnees. She explains that "migration-related divisions not only cut across ethnicity, but frequently divided families where members had lived on either side of the border during the war. As such, migration-related categorizations existed independent of, though sometimes associated with, ethnic

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[1] There was also presence of Burundian refugees in other countries of the region, but numbers were much smaller (Ruiz and Vargas-Silva 2021).

categorizations." (Schwartz 2019). This supports the idea that returnees are likely to be seen as outgroup members by stayees and vice versa.

In Table 1 we report the share of respondents who agreed with different statements regarding emigration, remittances and return. In this case, the sample is limited to stayee households in the 2011 round of the main survey that we used for the empirical analysis.[2] A third of respondents agree that emigration makes life harder for those who stay behind, 62% do not agree that they still contribute to the country of origin and a quarter agreed that they have abandoned Burundi. Panel C of Table 1 provide responses to questions that are specific about returnees. Close to a quarter of respondents agree that returnees do not fit in, and close to 67% agree that they get preferential treatment. Overall, attitudes towards emigration and return are mixed and show that there is scope for the existence of migration-related divisions.

As explained below, in the analysis we also explore how the results change depending on the ethnic composition of the communities. The initial expectation is that in less diverse communities, migration-related divisions could be more salient as a factor determining social divisions, therefore refugee return can have a more adverse effect on social cohesion.

The Hutu group accounts for close to 85% of Burundi's population, with Tutsis and the Twa accounting for 14% and 1%, respectively. We consider a community less ethnically diverse if the majority group accounts for 90% or more of the population. The information on ethnic diversity comes from the community survey. Close to 45% of the respondents in our sample live in less ethnically diverse communities.

Table 1 suggests that some attitudes towards emigration, remittances and return are different for less and more ethnically diverse communities, although the direction of the difference changes across questions. For instance, the share agreeing that returnees help the country is lower in less ethnically diverse communities (54% versus 61%). Individuals in these communities are also more likely to indicate that returnees do not fit in (25% versus 22%). However, those in less ethnically diverse communities are less likely to say that returnees receive preferential treatment (64% versus 69%).

Finally, we divide the communities based on land scarcity before the 1993 conflict in order to explore the possible role of posterior rules regarding land provision to returnees. Respondents in communities that had more and less pre-war land available have broadly similar attitude towards return.

[Table 1]

3. Data and methodology

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[2] In the main analysis we focus on the 2015 round of the survey.

3.1 Data

The data for this project was collected during January to March 2015 as part of a national survey on issues related to migration for the Labour Market Impacts of Forced Migration (LAMFOR) project.[3] The survey had two components. First, a household survey in which 15 households were interviewed in 100 communities (i.e. sous-collines) across the 17 provinces of the country. Second, a community survey in which a local leader was interviewed in each of the 100 communities. The number of communities selected in each province was based on information from the 2008 Census. Figure 2 indicates the location of the communities surveyed.

[Figure 2]

The survey is a follow-up to a survey conducted with the same households in 2011. However, most of the variables related to social cohesion were only collected in 2015, hence the main analysis in this paper focuses on that round.

Social cohesion is a multi-dimensional concept. Therefore, we use a series of different variables to measure it, including: (A) measures of support, (B) feelings towards conflict and reconciliation, (C) trust in others and on specific groups, and (D) participation in different community organizations.

Table 2 reports means for all the dependent variables and the Appendix provides a description of all the variables included in the analysis. We present the results for all respondents and then separately for those in more/less ethnically diverse communities, those in communities with more/less pre-war land availability and those in communities with better/worse attitudes towards return migration. In order to construct an index to proxy attitudes towards return at the community level we add the four responses to the return question in Table 1 (i.e. help, fit, new ideas and preferential treatment) and create a dummy to indicate that the community is above or below the mean for this variable.

We start the analysis by looking at two variables to measure the degree to which individuals and households support each other. The first is a dummy indicating that the individual agrees that people in the community help each other at least most of the time. 43% of the individuals responded that this was the case. The second variable is a dummy that indicates that in case of an emergency the respondent could borrow money from someone in the community who was not a household member. This was the case for 59% of respondents. The averages are similar across less and more ethnically diverse communities and in communities with different attitudes towards return. In both cases, the share that could borrow from other community members is higher in communities that are more ethnically diverse or have more negative attitudes towards refugee return. The gap is larger if we divide communities based on their pre-1993 war land availability. Communities with less land available are 6 and 7 percentage

points more likely to agree that the community members help each other and can borrow from others outside the household, respectively.

[Table 2]

Next we explore the role of factors related to violence and reconciliation. The first variable is a dummy indicating that the community is mainly peaceful and 96% of respondents agreed with this statement. In contrast, only 13% of respondents agrees with the next statement that a new conflict is unlikely. This is not surprising. As explained above, soon after we finished collecting the data, the President of Burundi announced that he was running for a third term in office and this led to renewed social conflict and a new wave of out-migration to Tanzania.

The next variable indicates that the respondent feels reconciled with the atrocities of the war and a majority of respondents (76%) agrees with this statement. The share agreeing with this statement is lower in communities with higher levels of migration-related divisions. Interestingly, a minority of respondents think that justice has been done to those who committed crimes during the war (37%). There is a 9 percentage point gap in this regard between less and more ethnically diverse communities and a 6 percentage point gap based on pre-war land availability.

The next set of independent variables measures trusts on 9 different groups. In general, levels of trust are high, with 92% of respondents indicating that they trust those of other ethnic groups. The lower level of trust is for ex-combatants, with 76% of residents indicating that they trust this group. Here, there is also a substantial 7 percentage point gap between those in more and less ethnically diverse communities.

The last set of independent variables measures if a household member participates in different organisations. Participation in political (35%) and religious (23%) groups is more common that participation in agricultural cooperatives (12%). Participation in political groups is four percentage points higher in less ethnically diverse communities, compared to more diverse ones.

3.2 Regression specifications

In the analysis we estimate a series of linear probability regressions along the following lines:

$$Y_i = \delta_j + \beta R_c + \emptyset H_i + \rho C_c + \varepsilon_i \tag{1}$$

Where Y_i represents one of the indicators of social cohesion explained above, δ_j is the province indicator, R_c is the share of returnees in the community, H_i indicates a series of household level controls and C_c are a series of community level of controls.

In the main estimations we estimate the share of returnees in the community, using the information from the survey (i.e. share who are returnees), but in the robustness section we show that results are robust to the use of alternative indicators. The Appendix (Table A1)

includes the definitions of all the variables included in the different estimations and descriptive statistics for the control variables (Table A2).

We present results for the full sample and divided by communities with lower/higher ethnic diversity, less/more pre-1993 war land availability and better/worse attitudes towards return. In the robustness checks we also present the results if we limit the analysis to stayees only. Limiting the sample in this way does not affect the main results of the paper.

3.3 Identification

As mentioned above, Tanzania mandated the return of all Burundian refugees from the 1993 conflict. Returnees also had a very strong incentive to return to their communities of origin as this was the place in which they were entitled to land, a very scarce resource in the country. The main concern regarding identification is that communities with initially large levels of displacement, and more return later on, could be inherently different from other communities and that this is what may be driving the results regarding social cohesion.

Before presenting our identification strategy it is important to highlight that there is substantial evidence that exposure to conflict in Burundi was generalised and indiscriminate and therefore it was largely random (Uvin 1999). In particular, the evidence suggests that it was unrelated to political allegiances or wealth levels (Voors et al. 2012). In the analysis we include several variables to account for conflict exposure at the household and community level. These experiences during the conflict include: experiencing land disputes, the death/disablement of a family member, and experiencing restrictions on movement.

In the estimation, we use the geographical characteristics of the communities of origin for identification purposes. In particular, we use the logarithm of the inverse of distance to the border of Tanzania (proximity) and the logarithm of the inverse of altitude (flatness) as instruments for the share of returnees in the population.

The idea is that once we control for conflict exposure, displacement largely depends on the accessibility of a safe haven. In Burundi, most of the displacement occurred by foot and therefore distance to the border and altitude are likely to have affected the level of international displacement from any given community. To highlight that this is the case, the amp in Figure 3 reports UNHCR data on the number of refugees in Tanzania in 2005 per province of origin. Those provinces which are closer to Tanzania generally had higher levels of international displacement than other provinces.

[Figure 3]

The Appendix (Table A4) reports the results of the first-stage estimation along with relevant tests. The estimation complies with the standard required tests, including over-identification tests. The main concern about the instruments is that proximity and flatness could relate to unobserved factors that affect variables related to social cohesion. We conduct several

analyses to explore this possibility. First, in the community survey we asked community leaders "Before the war in 1993, how was the level of trust between community members in this community?" and "Before the war in 1993, how was the participation in this community?" As such, in a first step we explore how responses to these variables relate to proximity and flatness. As shown in Panel A, there is no significant statistical relationship between per-war measures of social cohesion and proximity/flatness.

It is possible to argue that asking retrospective data on variables related to social cohesion could lead to recall bias. Therefore, we also focus on other variables related to education and wealth at the household level. Some of these variables (e.g. wealth) can still be affected by recall bias, but likely to a lesser degree than variables related to trust, etc.

First, for older households, i.e., those that were established before the onset of the conflict in 1993, we collected pre-conflict livestock and land ownership data. As explained by (Bundervoet 2010), there was a significant decrease in livestock levels in Burundi because of the war. However, pre-war livestock levels and size of land plots should provide a good idea of the household's economic background. As shown in Panel B of Table 3, there is no statistically significant relationship of proximity and flatness with pre-war livestock and pre-war land.

Another possibility is to look at education levels, which provide information about wealth status and estimate its relationship with proximity and flatness. Primary education in Burundi is compulsory for children between the ages of 7 and 12 years. However, the war destroyed a substantial portion of the country's schools, many of the teaching staff were killed and recruitment of new teachers was interrupted during the conflict (Fransen, Vargas-Silva and Siegel 2018). We focus on the years of education among those who were 14 years of age and older at the start of the conflict in 1993. The war should not have affected the educational outcomes (i.e. primary school education) of this group. As shown in Table 3, there is no significant impact of proximity and flatness on years of education or the likelihood of finishing primary school for this group.

[Table 3]

4. Results

4.1 Support measures

Table 4 reports the results measuring the degree to which individuals and households support each other. The results in Panel A measure the impact of refugee return on the perception that members of the community help each other at least most of the time. The coefficient is negative in all specifications and statistically significant in the main specification with the instrument (column 3). In this case, the results suggest that a 10 percentage point increase in the population share of returnees in a community leads to a 10.3 percentage points reduction in the likelihood of stating that community members mostly help each other.

Note that the coefficient is substantially larger in communities which are less ethnically diverse, with less pre-war land availability and with more negative attitudes towards return. This supports our initial expectations regarding the communities in which the impact of refugee return should be more negative.

Panel B of Table 4 reports the impact of refugee return on the possibility of borrowing money for emergencies from individuals outside the household. Here also the coefficients are negative. Looking at column 3, the coefficient suggests that a 10 percentage point increase in the population share of returnees decreases the possibility of borrowing money this way by 8.4 percentage points.

However, the dynamics across sub-samples of communities are different than in Panel A. Now the coefficient is larger for more ethnically diverse communities and for communities with more positive attitudes towards return. This is contrary to our original expectations and can reflect, among other things, the degree to which indicators of social cohesion, even the ones related to support among community members, reflect different factors. It is still the case that the coefficient for communities with less pre-war land availability is larger than for other communities.

[Table 4]

4.2 Violence and reconciliation measures

Table 5 presents the results for the impact of refugee return on violence and reconciliation measures. Panel A considers the question of whether the community is generally perceived as a peaceful community. The results in column 3 suggest that a 10 percentage point increase in the population share of refugees leads to a 5.6 percentage points reduction in the likelihood of perceiving the community as a peaceful one. Interestingly, the coefficient is very similar across communities with less and more ethnic diversity. The story is different if we divide communities on attitudes towards return. In those communities with more negative attitudes towards return the coefficient is larger and statically significant.

The coefficients are mostly statistically insignificant for the other three measures of violence and reconciliation. A key exception are the coefficients on war reconciliation and justice for communities with more negative attitudes towards return. In both cases the coefficient is negative, larger than for other communities and statistically significant.

[Table 5]

4.3 Trust

Table 6 presents the results related to trust towards different groups. There are several interesting patterns in the results. First, looking at the coefficients in column 2 we see that, even if none are statically significant, all are positive. This contrasts with the results of Tables

4 and 5, in which refugee return had negative effects on different measures related to social cohesion.

Second, comparing columns 3 and 4, we see that the effect of refugee return is substantially more positive in communities with less ethnic diversity. In other words, the effect on trust is more positive in the same types of communities in which the effect on other measures of social cohesion were more negative. In this case, the coefficients are significant for trust towards other ethnic groups and community leaders. A 10 percentage point increase in the population share of returnees increases trust in other ethnic groups and community leaders by 6.5 and 9.7 percentage points, respectively. The increase in trust towards other ethnic groups could be the result of the gradual process of replacing ethnic identification as a social marker by migration-related divisions.

Third, higher levels of refugee return lead to greater trust in returnees in communities that had higher pre-war levels of land availability. Finally, the impact of refugee return on social trust is higher on those communities with more positive attitudes towards return. In this case, the coefficient is statistically significant for trust towards other people in the community and community leaders.

[Table 6]

4.4 Community participation

Table 7 reports the results for the level of participation in community activities. Overall, the results suggest mixed dynamics regarding the impact of refugee return on participation in community activities. Looking at Panel A the results suggest that refugee return leads to more participation in agricultural cooperatives in communities with less ethnic diversity, more pre-war land availability and worse attitudes towards return.

The coefficients that are statistically significant for the other three types of community participation are all negative. Refugee return has a negative impact on participation in credit/savings association in communities with more ethnic diversity and more land availability. Refugee return has a negative impact on participation in political organisations in communities with less pre-war land availability and more positive attitudes towards return.

[Table 7]

4.5 Robustness

We conduct two key robustness checks. First, we explore the results if we limit the sample to stayees only. It is possible to argue that even with controls, the presence of returnees in the sample can bias the estimated effect of return on social cohesion in different ways. Hence, limiting the sample to stayees can be a way of isolating the effects of return. As shown in the second column of Table 8 the results do not change the results in major ways. The estimated effects of return on helping each other and borrowing money for emergencies are larger in

the stayee only sample, but the coefficient has the same sign. The coefficients for being in a peaceful community and the unlikely reoccurrence of conflict are now statistically insignificant, but the coefficients are in the same direction as those estimated with the main sample.

[Table 8]

In a second robustness check, we check the implications of changing our measure of the returnee share of the population. In the main estimations, the share of returnees in the population is constructed with information from the survey roster. This information is more accurate for some communities than others. We interviewed 15 households in each community, but the number of households in each community ranged from 34 to more than 100. Therefore, we also present results with an alternative measure of the share of returnees. This information is constructed from the information provided by the community leaders, which includes information on the number of returnees in the community as well as overall population. As shown in the third column of Table 8, the results are also similar with this alternative measure, although some more coefficients are statistically significant. In particular, the coefficient of feeling reconciled with the war and participation in religious groups are now statistically significant (negative in both cases).

5. Conclusion

Repatriation involves the reencounter of groups that were separated for many years and often decades. This process could lead to the reestablishment of old societal divisions or to the creation of new ones. Repatriation could also increase competition for scarce natural resources. These factors can have major implications for social cohesion at the community level. We explore these issues in Burundi, a country that experienced a major conflict and outflow of people, followed by large flows of refugee return a decade later.

Social cohesion is a multidimensional concept. We focus on aspects related to support, violence and reconciliation, trust and participation in community groups. The results suggest varying impacts of refugee return on different aspects of social cohesion. The stronger effects, suggest that refugee return has a negative impact on the feeling that community members help each other, could borrow money for emergencies from non-household members and felt that the community is peaceful. The estimated impacts on measures of trust and participation in community groups are mostly statistically insignificant.

We also explore how these effects differ across different sub-samples based on ethnic composition, land scarcity (pre-war) and attitudes towards return. Ethnicity is a major marker of identity in Burundi, land is very scarce, and returnees could claim previous land and attitudes are taken as a proxy for the possibility of the existences of migration-related identities (e.g. stayees versus returnees). The results suggest that the negative effect on the feeling that community members help each other is stronger in communities with less ethnic

diversity, less pre-war land availability and worse attitudes towards refugee return. These results highlight the possible role of new migration-related divisions and the provision of land to returnees. However, the results for other variables related to social cohesion point to other directions.

Overall, the results suggest that there is not a single story related to return migration that can cover all aspects of a complex concept such as social cohesion. However, the results do suggest that the process of emigration and return can lead to new divisions in society based on the location of individuals during the conflict. This means that efforts to encourage social cohesion in conflict-affected countries during the post-return period will require exploring and understanding the formation of these new divisions.

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Uvin, Peter. 1999. "Ethnicity and Power in Burundi and Rwanda: Different Paths to Mass Violence." *Comparative Politics* 31(3): 253–71.

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Figure 1 – Displacement and conflict stages
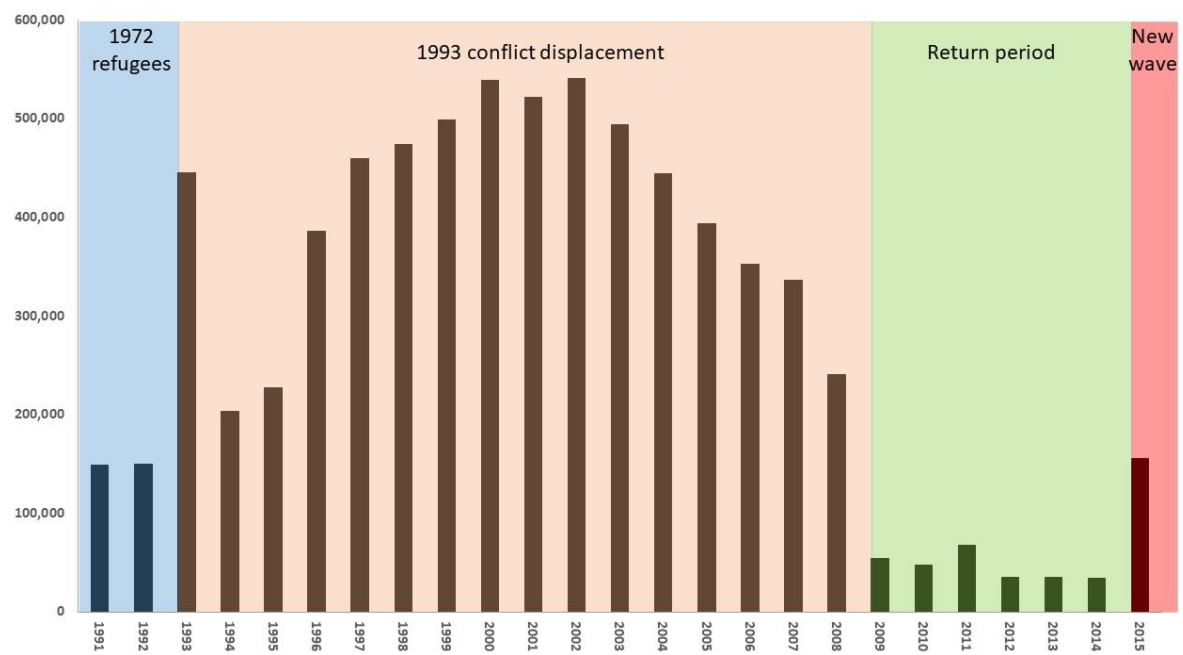
Figure 2 – Location of communities surveyed in Burundi
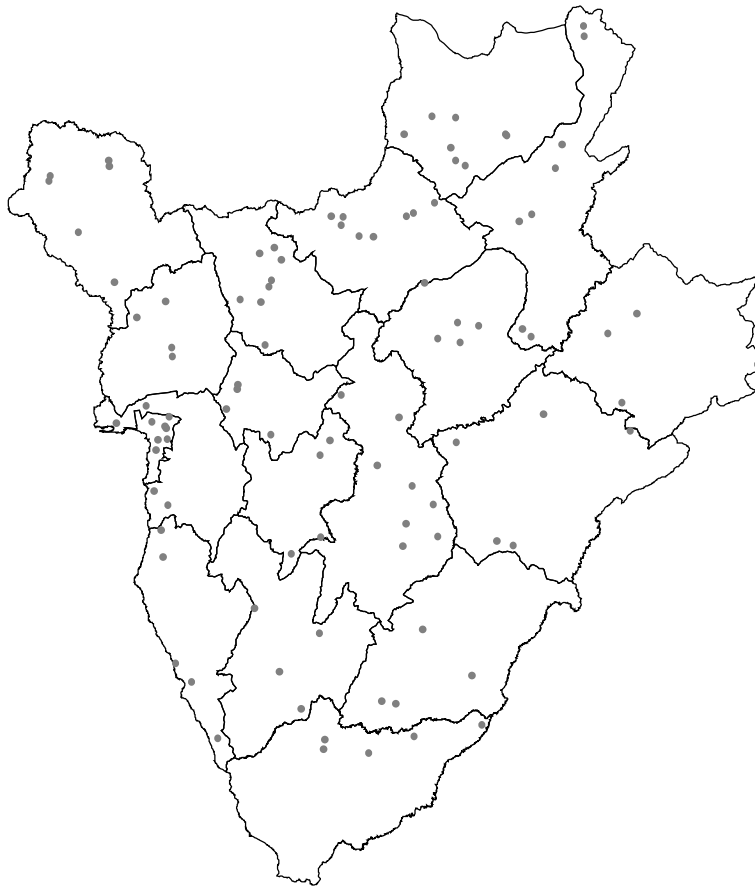
Figure 3 – Refugees in Tanzania by province

Refugees in Tanzania
(25093,74606]
(13821,25093]
(6423,13821]
[4261,6423]
No data
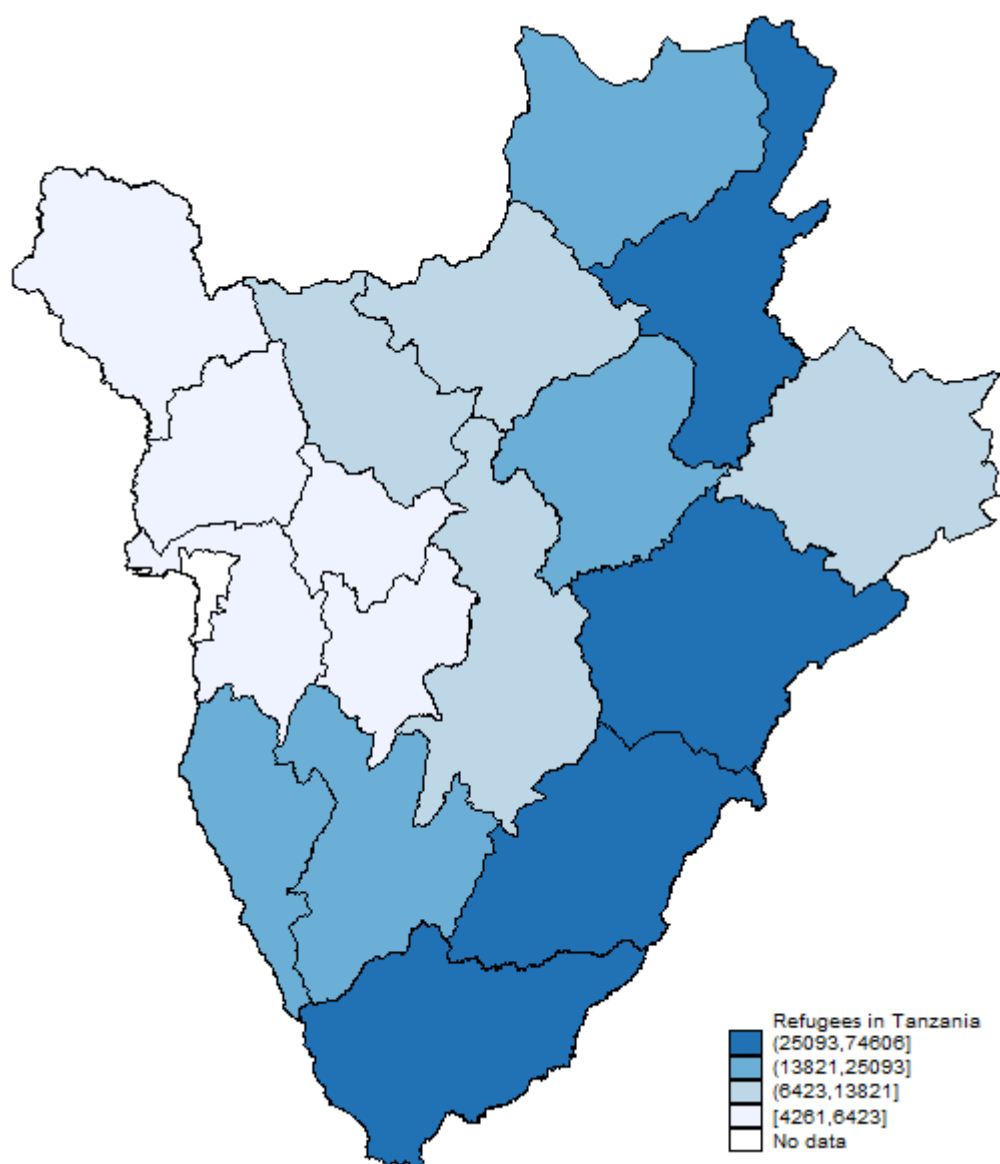
Table 1 – Attitude towards emigration and return (share agree %, 2011, stayees only)

	All	Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)	
		Less	More	Less	More
Panel A:When people leave the country					
It makes life harder for those who stay	32.01	22.10	39.34	29.41	35.39
They still contribute to the country of origin	38.24	39.61	37.15	34.84	42.52
They are able to support families in country of origin	68.38	64.34	71.51	67.08	70.43
They abandon their country	25.42	24.65	26.01	22.55	27.83
They get rich	59.54	60.15	59.09	57.70	61.61
Panel B: When people receive money from abroad					
They become lazier	18.48	16.36	20.06	16.97	19.87
It leads to resentment from others	64.17	63.77	64.46	61.79	66.36
They get rich	51.91	54.04	50.378	52.02	51.62
It helps develop our country	48.33	42.63	52.44	47.42	49.32
Panel C: When people who have lived abroad come back they					
Help the country	57.98	53.85	61.01	58.50	56.85
Do not fit in	23.47	25.00	22.32	23.47	23.83
Bring new ideas, knowledge and technology	68.65	68.35	68.87	68.28	68.59
Receive preferential treatment	66.83	64.62	68.51	66.45	67.00
Attitude towards return index (negative)	56.25	48.94	61.80	51.11	58.16

Table 2 – Means of independent variables

	All	Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
		Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
			Panel A: Support				
Help each other	0.4343	0.4435	0.4235	0.4635	0.3982	0.4306	0.4348
Borrow money	0.5851	0.5612	0.6039	0.6180	0.5459	0.5694	0.5968
			Panel B: Violence and reconciliation				
Peaceful community	0.9601	0.9568	0.9608	0.9583	0.9597	0.9689	0.9526
Unlikely reoccurrence of conflict	0.1330	0.1259	0.1350	0.1346	0.1315	0.1510	0.1186
Reconciled with war	0.7630	0.7663	0.7598	0.7678	0.7590	0.7957	0.7366
Justice has been done	0.3730	0.4209	0.3347	0.4026	0.3349	0.3788	0.3705
			Panel C: Trusts in				
People in the community	0.8898	0.8868	0.8922	0.8985	0.8724	0.8935	0.8793
Returnees	0.8862	0.8857	0.8845	0.8994	0.8792	0.9017	0.8792
Other ethnic groups	0.9223	0.9205	0.9235	0.9120	0.9329	0.9187	0.9266
Community leaders	0.8013	0.8101	0.7918	0.8113	0.7830	0.8201	0.7861
Ex-combatants	0.7652	0.8010	0.7366	0.7851	0.7448	0.7700	0.7675
			Panel D: Household members participating in				
Agricultural cooperative	0.1229	0.1247	0.1216	0.1357	0.1096	0.1340	0.1146
Credit/savings association	0.1972	0.2014	0.1961	0.1733	0.2260	0.1794	0.2134
Religious group	0.2274	0.2302	0.2275	0.2255	0.2304	0.2225	0.2332
Political party/group	0.3513	0.3741	0.3314	0.3528	0.3468	0.3540	0.3439

Table 3 – Impact of proximity and flatness on pre-war household and community characteristics

Variable	Panel A: Pre-war trust and community participation		
	High pre-war trust	High pre-war community participation	
Proximity	-0.0397 (0.1517)	0.1050 (0.1405)	
Flatness	-0.2619 (0.3829)	-0.2374 (0.3546)	
Communities	87	87	

Variable	Panel B: Pre-war household characteristics			
	Pre-war livestock	Pre-war land	Years education	Primary school
Proximity	-0.0414 (0.0701)	0.6753 (0.6262)	0.4438 (0.3234)	-0.0430 (0.0469)
Flatness	-0.2080 (0.1339)	-0.7541 (0.9495)	-0.7902 (0.7117)	-0.0686 (0.1033)
Households	368	368	550	754

Notes: Analysis of community characteristics is based on responses to the community survey. Pre-war livestock and land only available for households that were established before the war. Education is for household heads who were 14 years of age or older at the start of the war in 1993. Standard errors are included in parenthesis.

Table 4 – Relationship of measures of support with refugee return

Variable	All			Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
				Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Panel A: Help each other								
Share returnees	-0.2250*	-0.7070**	-1.0266***	-1.5623**	-0.5991	-1.3433*	-0.6368	-0.3018	-0.6068*
	(0.1258)	(0.3509)	(0.3912)	(0.7959)	(0.4814)	(0.7202)	(0.4191)	(0.6305)	(0.3472)
Observations	926	926	926	417	509	479	447	433	493
	Panel B: Borrow money for emergencies								
	-0.2128*	-0.4924	-0.8397**	-0.2273	-1.2657**	-1.5393**	-0.2017	-0.9524*	-0.3854
	(0.1218)	(-0.0432)	(0.3761)	(0.7136)	(0.5005)	(0.6945)	(0.4027)	(0.5612)	(0.3308)
	926	926	926	417	509	479	447	433	493
Controls	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note: * indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 10% level, ** indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 5% level, *** indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 1% level. Standard errors are included in parenthesis.

Table 5 – Relationship of violence and reconciliation measures with refugee return

	All			Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
				Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Variable					Panel A: Peaceful community				
Share	-0.0805	-0.5226**	-0.5604***	-0.6088*	-0.5274**	-0.5474	-0.1649	-0.2792	-0.6054***
returnees	(0.0641)	(0.2056)	(0.2174)	(0.3319)	(0.2684)	(0.3551)	(0.2080)	(0.25470)	(0.2281)
Observations	925	925	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
					Panel B: Unlikely reoccurrence of conflict				
Share	-0.0685	0.2329	0.4294*	-0.0772	0.2518	-0.1221	0.2580	-0.2745	0.3733
returnees	(0.0867)	(0.2121)	(0.2356)	(0.4078)	(0.2985)	(0.4173)	(0.2242)	(0.4263)	(0.2301)
Observations	893	893	893	406	487	467	426	418	475
					Panel C: Reconciled with war				
Share	0.0120	-0.2672	-0.4072	-0.1462	-0.7793	-0.8471	0.1330	-0.2617	-0.5480*
returnees	(0.1101)	(0.3123)	(0.3340)	(0.6234)	(0.4750)	(0.6310)	(0.3557)	(0.5070)	(0.3046)
Observations	922	922	922	417	505	477	445	431	491
					Panel D: Justice has been done				
Share	-0.1051	0.2087	-0.1158	0.3941	-0.4333	0.6145	-0.4322	-0.4324	-0.5737*
returnees	(0.1220)	(0.3416)	(0.3651)	(0.7094)	(0.4764)	(0.6516)	(0.4028)	(0.6252)	(0.3131)
Observations	871	871	871	393	478	456	415	410	461
Controls	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note: * indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 10% level, ** indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 5% level, *** indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 1% level. Standard errors are included in parenthesis.

Table 6 – Relationship of trust measures with refugee return

Variable	All		Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
			Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Panel A: People in the community							
Share returnees	0.0676	0.1553	0.4281	0.0782	0.3059	0.3981	0.7679*	-0.1306
	(0.0812)	(0.2633)	(0.4211)	(0.3626)	(0.4408)	(0.2688)	(0.3967)	(0.2826)
Observations	923	923	416	507	476	447	432	491
	Panel B: Trust returnees							
Share returnees	0.1229*	0.0625	0.1843	0.0571	0.1868	0.6015**	0.5721	-0.0716
	(0.0751)	(0.2719)	(0.4594)	(0.3692)	(0.4933)	(0.2697)	(0.4907)	(0.2654)
Observations	911	911	412	499	472	439	428	483
	Panel C: Other ethnic groups							
Share returnees	0.0391	0.2126	0.6529*	0.0883	0.5119	0.3514	0.6136	-0.0632
	(0.0747)	(0.2344)	(0.3518)	(0.3230)	(0.4528)	(0.2162)	(0.4775)	(0.2349)
Observations	923	923	416	507	476	447	433	490
	Panel D: Community leaders							
Share returnees	0.0656	0.3855	0.9687*	-0.1274	0.8720*	0.2884	0.8556*	0.3071
	(0.1052)	(0.2942)	(0.5065)	(0.4520)	(0.5147)	(0.3359)	(0.5223)	(0.2742)
Observations	923	923	417	506	476	447	432	491
	Panel E: Ex-combatants							
Share returnees	-0.0940	0.2543	0.6547	-0.0535	0.9539	0.3757	0.7694	0.0148
	(0.1135)	(0.3159)	(0.5648)	(0.4514)	(0.6072)	(0.3455)	(0.5773)	(0.2894)
Observations	900	900	398	502	469	431	427	473
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note: * indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 10% level, *** indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 1% level. Standard errors are included in parenthesis.

Table 7 – Relationship of household participation in community activities with refugee return

Variable	All		Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
			Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(5)	(6)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Panel A: Agricultural cooperative							
Share returnees	0.1369*	0.2089	1.1359***	-0.3783	-0.1049	0.3351*	-0.5744	0.2339*
	(0.0823)	(0.1867)	(0.423)	(0.2677)	(0.4038)	(0.1839)	(0.4233)	(0.1407)
Observations	925	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
	Panel B: Credit/savings association							
Share returnees	-0.1831*	-0.3369	0.5512	-0.783**	-0.2981	-0.6218*	-0.4165	-0.0233
	(0.0982)	(0.2835)	(0.6420)	(0.2647)	(0.3906)	(0.3214)	(0.3754)	(0.2573)
Observations	925	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
	Panel C: Religious group/organization							
Share returnees	0.0409	-0.5050	-0.8514	-0.3649	-1.0871*	0.2636	0.1426	-0.3846
	(0.1100)	(0.3126)	(0.6293)	(0.4079)	(0.5635)	(0.3598)	(0.5167)	(0.2766)
Observations	925	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
	Panel D: Political party/group							
Share returnees	0.0316	-0.1172	-0.2714	-0.0977	-1.0478*	-0.0612	-1.5484**	0.0687
	(0.1207)	(0.3441)	(0.6788)	(0.4650)	(0.6400)	(0.3730)	(0.6523)	(0.3282)
Observations	925	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note: * indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 10% level, ** indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 5% level, *** indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 1% level. Standard errors are included in parenthesis.

Table 8 – Robustness checks

	Main estimation	Stayees only	Alternative measure return
	Panel A: Help each other		
Share returnees	-1.0266***	-1.4627**	-2.4118**
	(0.3912)	(0.5948)	(1.0815)
Observations	926	771	894
	Panel B: Borrow money for emergencies		
Share returnees	-0.8397**	-1.1731**	-2.6394**
	(0.3761)	(0.5943)	(1.0738)
Observations	926	771	894
	Panel C: Peaceful community		
Share returnees	-0.5604***	-0.3001	-0.7002
	(0.2174)	(0.2607)	(0.4694)
Observations	925	771	894
	Panel D: Unlikely reoccurrence of conflict		
Share returnees	0.4294*	0.4783	0.6780
	(0.2356)	(0.3348)	(0.60454)
Observations	893	743	863
	Panel E: Reconciled with war		
Share returnees	-0.4072	-0.9034	-1.7206*
	(0.3340)	(0.5530)	(0.9917)
Observations	922	767	892
	Panel F: Justice has been done		
Share returnees	-0.1158	-0.2246	-0.4840
	(0.3651)	(0.5872)	(1.0360)
Observations	871	723	841
	Panel G: Trust people in the community		
Share returnees	0.1553	0.3200	0.4183
	(0.2633)	(0.3657)	(0.6520)
Observations	923	768	892
	Panel H: Trust returnees		
Share returnees	0.0625	0.0220	0.0121
	(0.2719)	(0.4157)	(0.8636)
Observations	911	757	880
	Panel I: Trust other ethnic groups		
Share returnees	0.2126	0.1064	1.1507*
	(0.2344)	(0.3437)	(0.7090)
Observations	923	769	880
	Panel J: Trust community leaders		
Share returnees	0.3855	0.2141	0.8333
	(0.2942)	(0.4571)	(0.6162)
Observations	923	770	892
	Panel K: Trust ex-combatants		
Share returnees	0.2543	-0.0705	-0.1044
	(0.3159)	(0.5051)	(0.8419)
Observations	900	749	892
	Panel L: Agricultural cooperative		
Share returnees	0.2089	0.0493	0.3607
	(0.1867)	(0.2988)	(0.9050)
Observations	925	770	870
	Panel M: Credit/savings association		
Share returnees	-0.3369	-0.4544	0.4355
	(0.2835)	(0.3794)	(0.5660)
Observations	925	770	894
	Panel N: Religious group/organization		
Share returnees	-0.5050	-0.7803	-1.5018**
	(0.3126)	(0.4776)	(0.6919)
Observations	925	770	894
	Panel O: Political party/group		
Share returnees	-0.1172	-0.3293	-1.2989
	(0.3441)	(0.5398)	(0.8643)
Observations	925	770	894
Controls	X	X	X
IV	X	X	X

Note: * indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 10% level, ** indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 5% level, *** indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 1% level. Standard errors are included in parenthesis.

Appendix

Contents

Table A1. Definition of variables

Table A1 provides the definition of all the variables used in the estimations. These variables are included in alphabetical order.

Variable	Definition
Age head	In years.
Agricultural cooperative	Dummy equal to one if at least one household member is an active member of an agricultural cooperative. Here an active member regularly attends meetings and is aware of decisions that are made within the organization.
Attitude towards return	We added the responses to four questions on return, coding a negative attitude as a 1 and a positive attitude as a zero. The question was: *When people who have lived abroad come back they – (1) Help the country, (2) Do not fit in, (3) Bring new ideas, knowledge and technology, (4) Receive preferential treatment*. We then created a dummy to indicate that the community is above or below the mean for this variable.
Borrow money	This is a dummy equal to one if the person responded that they could borrow money from at least one person outside their household. The text of the question was as follows: *If you suddenly needed a small amount of money [enough to pay for expenses for your household for one week], how many people beyond your immediate household could you turn to who would be willing to provide this money?*
Child to adult ratio	Number of children in the household divided by number of adults in the household. Adult = 14 years of age or older. Children = less than 14 years of age.
Community deaths/ disablement in conflict	Share of households in the community who reported the deaths/ disablement of at least one household member during the conflict period. The text of the question was as follows: *During the last period of conflict in Burundi (1993 to 2005), how many times did this household experience the following incidents?*
Community land disputes	Share of households in the community who reported experiencing at least one land dispute during the conflict period. The text of the question was as follows: *During the last period of conflict in Burundi (1993 to 2005), how many times did this household experience the following incidents?*
Community restriction on movement	Share of households in the community who reported experiencing at least one event of restriction on movement during the conflict period. The text of the question was as follows: *During the last period of conflict in Burundi (1993 to 2005), how many times did this household experience the following incidents?*

Credit/savings association	Dummy equal to one if at least one household member is an active member of a credit/savings association. Here an active member regularly attends meetings and is aware of decisions that are made within the organization.
Deaths/ disablement in conflict	Number of deaths/disablement of household members during the conflict period. The text of the question was as follows: *During the last period of conflict in Burundi (1993 to 2005), how many times did this household experience the following incidents?*
Ethnic diversity	Dummy equal to one if the majority ethnic group accounts for 90% or more of the community's population.
Female head	Dummy equal to one if the head is a female.
Flatness	Logarithm of the inverse of altitude in metres.
Help each other	This is a dummy variable indicating that the individual perceives that people in the community help each other (i.e. responses of 1 and 2). The text of the question was as follows: *How well do people in your sous-colline help each other out these days?* Reponses use a five point scale, where 1 means always helping and 5 means never helping.
Household size	Number of members of the household.
Internally displaced	Dummy equal to one if at least one member of the household spent at least three months in displacement within Burundi.
Justice has been done	This is a dummy variable indicating that the individual agrees with a statement that justice has been done in response to war crimes (i.e. responses of 4 and 5). The text of the statement was as follows: *I feel justice has been done to those who committed crimes during the war.* Reponses use a five point scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree.
Land disputes	Number of land disputes experienced by the household during the conflict period. The text of the question was as follows: *During the last period of conflict in Burundi (1993 to 2005), how many times did this household experience the following incidents?*
Married head	Dummy equal to one if the head is married.
Peaceful	This is a dummy variable indicating that the individual perceives that the community is peaceful (i.e. responses of 1 and 2). The text of the question was as follows: *In your opinion, is this sous-colline generally peaceful or marked by violence?* Reponses use a five point scale, where 1 means very peaceful and 5 means very violent.
Political party/group	Dummy equal to one if at least one household member is an active member of a political party/group. Here an active member regularly

	attends meetings and is aware of decisions that are made within the organization.
Pre-war community participation	Dummy equal to one if the community leader indicated that participation in community activities was very high during the pre-war period.
Pre-war land	Dummy equal to one if the community leader indicated that pre-war land availability was very high and pre-war land quality was high or if the community leader indicated that pre-war land availability was high and pre-war land quality was very high.
Pre-war trust	Dummy equal to one if the community leader indicated that trust among community members was very high during the pre-war period.
Primary edu head	Dummy equal to one if the person completed primary schooling.
Proximity	Logarithm of inverse of distance to Tanzania in kilometres.
Reconciled with war	This is a dummy variable indicating that the individual agrees with a statement that he/she feels reconciled with the events of the war (i.e. responses of 4 and 5). The text of the statement was as follows: *I feel reconciled with the atrocities that I experienced during the war in Burundi*. Reponses use a five point scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree.
Religious group/organization	Dummy equal to one if at least one household member is an active member of a religious group/organization. Here an active member regularly attends meetings and is aware of decisions that are made within the organization.
Restriction on movement	Number of times the household experienced restrictions on movement during the conflict period. The text of the question was as follows: During the last period of conflict in Burundi (1993 to 2005), how many times did this household experience the following incidents?
Returnee share	Returnees as a share of the population of community. Analysis uses two versions, one constructed from household survey and one constructed from community survey. A returnee must have spent three months outside Burundi.
Trust in community leaders	This is a dummy variable indicating that the individual trusts community leaders (i.e. responses of 4 and 5). The text of the statement was as follows: *Please indicate the extent to which you trust the following people, groups, and institutions.* Reponses use a five point scale, where 1 means no trust at all and 5 means completely trust.
Trust in ex-combatants	This is a dummy variable indicating that the individual trusts ex-combatants (i.e. responses of 4 and 5). The text of the statement was as follows: *Please indicate the extent to which you trust the following people, groups, and institutions.* Reponses use a five point scale, where 1 means no trust at all and 5 means completely trust.

Trust in other ethnic groups	This is a dummy variable indicating that the individual trusts other ethnic groups (i.e. responses of 4 and 5). The text of the statement was as follows: *Please indicate the extent to which you trust the following people, groups, and institutions.* Reponses use a five point scale, where 1 means no trust at all and 5 means completely trust.
Trust in others in the community (sous-colline)	This is a dummy variable indicating that the individual trusts others in the community/sous-colline (i.e. responses of 4 and 5). The text of the statement was as follows: *Please indicate the extent to which you trust the following people, groups, and institutions.* Reponses use a five point scale, where 1 means no trust at all and 5 means completely trust.
Trust in returnees	This is a dummy variable indicating that the individual trusts returnees (i.e. responses of 4 and 5). The text of the statement was as follows: *Please indicate the extent to which you trust the following people, groups, and institutions.* Reponses use a five point scale, where 1 means no trust at all and 5 means completely trust.
Unlikely reoccurrence of conflict	This is a dummy variable indicating that the individual disagrees with the statement: *I feel the reoccurrence of conflict in Burundi is a real danger.*

Table A2. Means of control variables

	Means
Age head	47.8205
Primary edu head	0.2843
Married head	0.8227
Female head	0.1632
Household size	5.7027
Child to adult ratio	0.8782
Internally displaced	0.2616
Land disputes	0.3449
Deaths/disablement in conflict	0.2184
Restriction on movement	0.5643
Community land disputes	0.1602
Community deaths/disablement in conflict	0.1105
Community restriction on movement	0.1726
Ethnic diversity	0.4519
Land availability (pre-war)	0.4832

Tables A3 and A4. First stage results

Table A3 sum reports the descriptive statistics of the two instruments. The average distance from the border was 56 kilometres, which is substantial given the lack of roads and hilly terrain in Burundi. Distance to the border varied from 2 to 147 kilometres. The average altitude was 1,572 meters. In turn, altitude varied from 757 meters to 2,172 meters.

Table A4 reports the results from the first stage regression. Proximity and Flatness both have a strong statistically significant impact on the share of returnees. We also report different test statistics to support the choice of instrument. First, we report the Kleibergen-Paap LM statistic for underidentification test, which is rejected. The weak identification test is also rejected. Finally, we fail to reject the overidentification test (null hypothesis is that the instruments are valid).

Table A3 – Descriptive statistics of the instruments

Variable	Descriptive statistics	
	Mean	SD
Distance (kms)	56.52	35.09
Proximity (ln(1/distance)	-3.80	0.76
Altitude (meters)	1,570.80	310.81
Flatness (ln(1/altitude)	-7.34	0.23

Table A4 – First stage results

	First stage regressions
Proximity	0.0830***
	(0.0150)
Flatness	0.2115***
	(0.0209)
Underidentification test	
Kleibergen-Paap LM statistic	106.80
χ^2 P-value	0.0000
Weak identification test	
Kleibergen-Paap Wald F statistic	77.73
Overidentification test	
Hansen J statistic	0.075
χ^2 P-value	0.7837
F-test excluded instruments	77.73
Controls	X

Note: *** indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 1% level. Standard errors are included in parenthesis.